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ABSTRACT

Intended for school psychologists, the guidelines suggest ways of intervening with troubled readers. An initial chapter notes the size of the problem and asserts that school psychologists have some training to work with troubled readers. Chapter 2 reviews the reading process, addressing such aspects as the interaction of text, reader, and content as well as the role of the basal reader in reading. Chapter 3 addresses characteristics of students with poor reading skills, primarily low self-concept as evidenced in response to competition, locus of control, and the child's own view of himself or herself. Diagnostic evaluation and assessment are the major foci of chapter 4 which reviews components of appropriate assessment. The final goal of evaluation, remediation, is the topic of chapter 5 which considers grouping, teacher feedback, student-classroom interactions and peer interactions. Sample reading questionnaires are appended; seven pages of references conclude the document. (CL)

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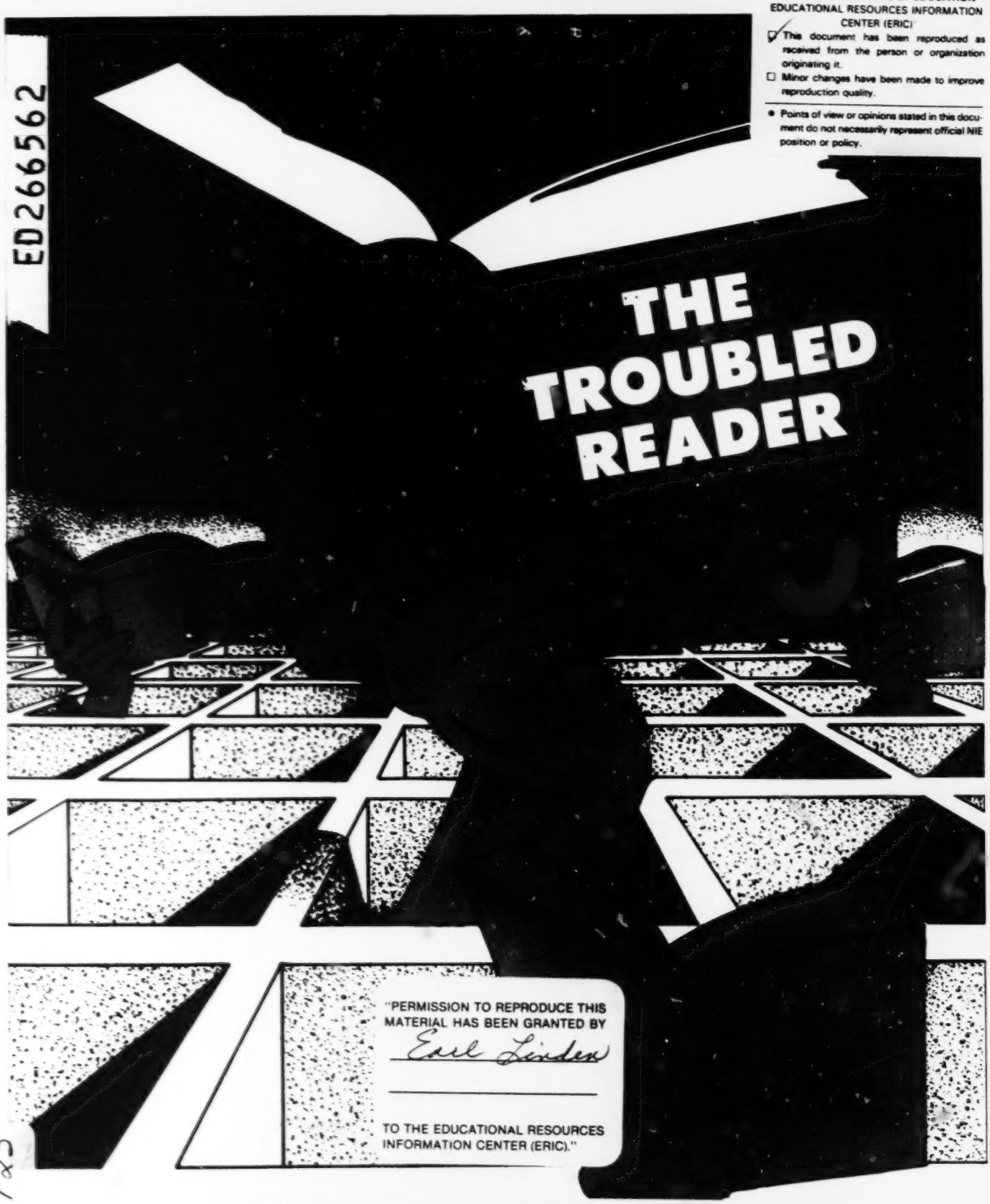

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Access to Intervention for the School Psychologist

Iowa Department of Public Instruction

School Psychological Services

EC 181725

The Troubled Reader

Access to Intervention for the School Psychologist

by Kurt Meredith and Jeannie Steele

1985

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Introduction

There are few skills anyone will learn that will have greater impact on one's life than reading. Even at a time when video production is reaching new popularity, reading is a nearly crucial life skill. Similarly, there are few skills if undeveloped which will have a more dramatic impact on one's existence than reading. In our society it is simply not possible to be neutral where reading is concerned.

As those associated with education know (Harris & Harris, 1982), reading is the cornerstone of the educational process. The entire curricula is based upon the systematic growth and development of reading skills. As soon as normal reading development slows or ceases, educational difficulties for the student begin and grow exponentially.

As the central task of education, reading occupies a considerable amount of each student's in-school time, both in direct instruction of reading skills and with the practical application of reading skills to other learning tasks. School psychologists, wishing to impact on those students who find the educational process unsuccessful, must inevitably address the issue of reading.

Presently the school psychologist is involved in the reading program only when a student has experienced significant delay in reading skill development. The response has been to evaluate, through a series of standardized screening measures, the extent to which a particular student is delayed. Reported in either standard scores or grade equivalencies, the outcome of evaluation has generally been a decision of whether or not to place a student in special education programming.

This response scenario to the reading referral has underscored the primary activity of school psychology for many years. With assessment and placement the quintessential element of the referral process, these procedures have served well both the special education student and school psychologist. By identifying the extent of delay, school systems have addressed the issues of where to begin a basal based re-instruction program and with whom the child should be grouped. This information has been valuable in allowing school psychologists the opportunity to discover service needs for many students who had heretofore been unidentified and unserved.

Additionally, many states have developed special education criteria based on the gap between potential reading skill development

and actual reading skill development (Reynolds, 1981). Thus, to meet the primary referral needs and state placement criteria, school psychologists have emphasized the role of testing and placement over and above many other possible roles.

As is generally thought to be the case, emphasis on one particular area must necessarily lead to a lessening of attention to others. Emphasis on placement needs of potential special education students has left little opportunity for the school psychologist to work within the regular educational setting with teachers or with students who, while not experiencing significant success, are not handicapped students requiring special services. It has also left less time for the school psychologist to provide services beyond diagnosis. Once diagnosed, the disabled reader's reading program is generally developed without the insights or consultative skills of the school psychologist.

Another consequence of the placement emphasis has been the school psychologist's tendency to lose sight of the forest for the trees. While school psychologists have been busy assessing reading progress through standardized instruments, the end result may have been a loss of sight of what reading is, how readers learn to read and what tools are available to aid the troubled reader. This would not be such a serious problem if there existed a continued need to catch up with the backlog of unidentified special education students. However, except for a few isolated states, this need is rapidly decreasing and, as we will see later, a new and growing need for school psychological services is emerging.

The new demand for school psychological services does not flow from a bold new world or a dramatic shift in clientele. The future for school psychology lies in paying greater attention to the forest and not simply some of the trees. In other words, when a student is referred he or she must be viewed as a whole child within the context of the entire educational system, the total student population, the curricula, and the classroom. Thus, to respond to the reading referral we must know more about the child, his school and learning to read, if we are to effectively meet the changing expectations for school psychologists.

As with placement criteria, legislative and litigative action have been the prime movers in altering the school psychologist's role in the school setting. The profession is not leading a charge into the classroom, but is being gently, persistently and inexorably tugged into the classroom.

Court action abounds. Most of the landmark decisions which originally led to greater placement emphasis, (e.g., PARC v. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Craig v. Boren, Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia, Roncher v. Walter, New Mexico Association v. State of New Mexico along with P.L. 94-142) are now being reexamined and the role of the special student in the regular

educational setting is being expanded as a result. These decisions and the anti-discrimination legislation that has been enacted at state and national levels have always required the fullest possible integration of all students. It is only because of the initial need to identify and place students that the issue of total integration was only partially addressed.

Now the issues associated with integration are being addressed in greater detail. The Iowa State Board of Education, 1984 has adopted a paper entitled the "Integration Imperative" which calls for the integration of even the most severely handicapped student into the general education community.

With this continued movement toward integration at all educational levels for all students the school psychologist must attend to the broader educational arena to be effective intervenors. It is no longer sufficient to identify the extent of a student's delay. The question that now must be answered is: what are the tools available to the teacher that will provide the student with an opportunity for success in the educational setting? By success in reading it is meant continued growth toward appropriate grade level achievement and successful application of learning to the world in which the student lives.

In the context of reading, the implications for the school psychologist are many. The present generally accepted reading evaluation procedures are insufficient. The limited knowledge school psychologists have of reading is wholly inadequate and training programs which address the diagnostic issues in much broader terms are needed. It is not possible to adequately treat a reading problem without understanding the entire educational system affecting the situation.

By "entire system" what is meant is the inter- and intra-action of the student with himself, the educational system and the goals of both student and school system. Childhood reading difficulties, like so many other difficulties school psychologists face, rarely stem from a single, clearly identifiable etiology and are rarely resolved by manipulating one or several superficial variables.

What is true when serving the child with behavioral problems, the depressed child, the school phobic, or many other presenting problems also applies to the diagnosis and treatment of the troubled reader. That basic truth is that the child is a complex integration of feelings, hopes, fears, knowledge, perceptions and experiences. All of these are brought to the threshold of each new experience, and when roadblocks to new learning appear, these basic elements must be understood, in at least a global way, before an effective remedial program can be constructed. It was once suggested that the infant's experience of the world was of a "blooming, buzzing confusion." There is enough evidence to adequately disprove this notion. However, it is quite clear that the growing child is "blooming" and "buzzing" and we

must take notice of the nature of the blossom and the garden it grows in if we are to be successful intervenors.

In the past the medical profession has erred in its treatment of many illnesses. When treating a patient with a specific illness, treatment was often recommended which, while curing the specific disease, raised havoc with the rest of the patient because the entire bodily system was not considered in the treatment. In some cases, quite unfortunately, the old expression came to pass: that the cold was cured but the patient died. With the advent of a holistic approach to medical care this scenario has all but disappeared. Similarly, a wholistic approach to school psychological services is also required. When evaluating reading problems it is necessary to know what reading is all about. This includes not simply knowledge of what a poor reader is but knowledge of what constitutes a good reader as well.

It is essential in conducting a reading evaluation to be able to differentiate reading problems from instructional problems. Knowledge of reading as well as reading assessment is equally important to remediation. Remediation often requires a change in both the reader's approach to reading and the instructor's approach to instructing. Without knowledge of reading research and theory the school psychologist may be unable to intervene effectively. Thus, the first goal will be to define reading in a context relevant to the practicing school psychologist.

The remaining goals are to establish a fundamental understanding of the reading process as it is presently viewed by today's researchers and theorists who see meaning as the essential element of reading. From this perspective of reading as essentially the pursuit of meaning, assessment procedures will be presented which will, hopefully, continue to relate to reading as the purposeful pursuit of new meanings and understandings. Evaluative procedures will be presented which are theoretically sound and which represent a clearer picture of the student as a "reader" rather than as Giroux (1984) has suggested students have simply become, "masters of the tools of reading."

Remediation strategies will be presented which evolve out of the evaluation process but which remain within the context of the educational environment. It is intended that the remediation strategies outlined will provide the school psychologist with skills enabling him or her to make educationally sound course corrections for both the individual reader and the reading instructional program. There have been times when school psychologists have recommended remediation strategies that have either been or have been perceived to be legitimate to the individual only to prove to be counterproductive to the entire class or reading group. By generating remedial approaches from within the constructs of a theoretically sound instructional base, individual recommendations will enhance both the individual and the group as a whole.

Finally, as in most efforts such as this, the authors have a definite reading philosophy which greatly influences the underlying premises presented. As great an effort as possible will be made to preserve the research base from which most of the ensuing information is derived. However, it is appropriate for the reader to have a general idea of the basic assumptions underlying what is being presented.

The theoretical perspective which forms the basis for this presentation is that meaning is the essential element in reading. Furthermore, meaning is not thought to reside within the text or within the reader alone; rather, it emerges from an interactive process involving both text and reader. Teachers make reading meaningful as they facilitate the connections upon which meanings are built. Thus, the quality of reading materials, the readiness of readers for reading, and the ability of teachers to facilitate meaningful reading by bringing the reader and the text together are essential elements for successful reading. And, reading is seen as a tool of language through which the child's world is 'decoded' into meaningful units.

The student is also viewed in this paper, in a phenomenological sense. That is, the child is seen as a unique collection, standing against a backdrop of experiences which he or she integrates and interprets in a uniquely ordered fashion. However, this is only part of the definition. The child is not a simple summation of those events and experiences, not a bundling up of the biological and psychological into an object self. Rather, the child becomes all of these experiences gathered together from that child's particular point of view.

Thus, to evaluate the student's needs one must come to know what it means to be that child, to be that student. To do so school psychologists must study the essence of the child, where essence is the facticity of the child before being reduced to discourse. That is, a view of the entire child as he or she exists within his or her world must be maintained. Labels, convenient descriptors and generalizations which are applied in order to reference groups of like behaviors need to be kept in perspective. When general descriptors are applied, that which makes that particular child unique is, for those who subscribe to the labels, removed for purposes of discussion. School psychologists need to keep this reality in mind when planning for the child. Remedial prescriptions need to be developed based on the uniqueness of the child's needs. One must examine the child with the understanding that the world is exactly what each child perceives it to be rather than a mere approximation of the examiner's world view.

A wholistic reading program is essential for teaching the troubled reader reading from this theoretical perspective. In order for a wholistic program to be successful, the whole child must be

considered in the reading program. Just how an analysis of the whole child can lend itself to an improved reading program with greater gains in reading will be demonstrated. Such characteristics as self concept, self interests, reading/learning objectives and reader perceptions of reading will be explored. A wholistic reader assessment will be presented and example assessment procedures provided. For troubled readers, instructors of reading need to understand that they are teaching "students" rather than "content." Teachers need support to break away from the 'reification' of the reading curriculum, to see themselves as teachers of reading and not, as has been suggested, teachers see themselves (Shannon, 1983), as conduits for the materials that in turn teach reading. The effects of teacher expectations are significant for learning and the role of the teacher as a flexible, respected and expectant individual will be explored.

Thus, what is presented here stems from the fundamental world view that, not only is reading viewed as an assemblage of meanings, but so too is the reader. To understand the reader, to evaluate and remediate the reader it is necessary to begin with the child's world as it is directly experienced by him.

In so viewing the troubled reader it becomes possible to restructure his or her reading program so that it becomes meaningful. Once accomplished, schooling can become more meaningful. As Henry Giroux (1984) has stated, it is essential that we learn how we "make schooling meaningful so as to make it critical and how we can make it critical so as to make it emancipatory." This must truly be the goal of reading instruction and of education.

Chapter I

Why Reading

With the myriad tasks facing the school psychologist, why should greater attention be paid to reading than to any other curricular need? The demands on most practicing school psychologists are usually far in excess of time available. The need to properly budget both training time and direct service time is great. For reading to receive the kind of attention suggested here, a convincing case must be made for its relevance to the profession and its importance to those seeking school psychological services.

Some may conclude that reading as a medium is rapidly losing its value. With the constant barrage of audio-visual media it is easy to see why such a conclusion could be drawn. Yet, statistics from the Americal Library Association (1984) suggest a different trend. It reports that reading of all types has increased dramatically in America over the past five years. In 1983 Americans borrowed nearly one billion books from public libraries. This total represents a twenty percent increase. A Library of Congress (1983) study discovered Americans to be reading more than ever. Thirty-five percent of all readers of books are reading at least one book a week. This rate is double the reading rate of good readers over five years ago.

Young readers are also reading more. Their reading material, however, has shifted. They are reading fewer books but more magazines. The average American student now reads 11.7 hours per week while spending 16.3 hours per week watching television.

A study published by the Southeast Iowa Library Association in May of 1984 reported that a total of 10,005 different newspaper titles are published annually in this country and nearly 12,000 separate magazines and periodical titles are published each year as well.

Despite these figures, other statistics from the Library of Congress study emerged and loom large and potentially troublesome for America's readers. Over fifty percent of the increase in reading is accounted for by ten percent of today's readers. While it is not clear what the cause of this gap in reading is, it suggests that, for many, reading has lost its meaning or their reading skills have failed to keep pace with the reading materials they face, either for job training or leisure. In addition to this disturbing data, another finding is cause for greater alarm. For the majority of high school graduates, either reading has become so unenjoyable or so alienating

that they never read an entire book after completing their school career.

Why is this relevant to the practicing school psychologist? Results of a survey of referrals for school psychological services conducted by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction in 1981 may provide some answers. Of the total number of referrals made, the vast majority appear to be either directly or indirectly related to reading problems.

As the data in Table 1 indicates, the primary reasons for referral are numerous. This was true for all grade levels and all ages surveyed. However, it is clear that reading was the single most frequent reason for referral. This is true even when the data are viewed very narrowly. That is, when only those referrals are counted which actually state reading as the primary referral problem. Not included in the reading totals are the children re-evaluated each year who have been placed in special education programs with reading handicaps.

When the reasons for referral are combined, academic referrals exceed non-academic referral questions by an overwhelming margin. (See Table 2) It is clear that the greatest demand for school psychological services is academic in nature. Of these academic referrals, there is considerable evidence that the vast majority are reading related.

What does this mean for the practicing school psychologist? There are several implications. Firstly, as the data in Table 1 suggests, the range of services school psychologists are asked to provide is extensive. Secondly, it is extremely difficult to be expertly trained to meet all of these varied demands. Thirdly, of the services sought, the single most requested service appears to be assistance to the troubled reader.

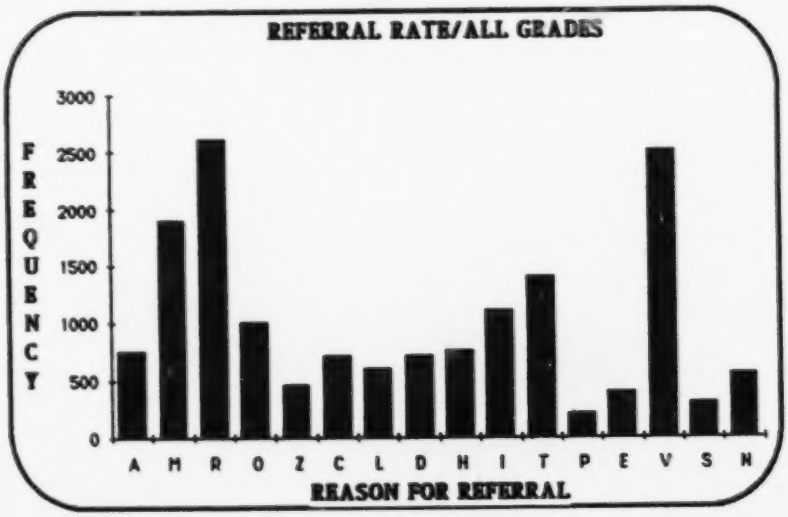
But I'm not trained to aid the troubled reader!

Many school psychologists have recognized the need to provide more diagnostic data and greater remedial assistance to the reading teacher (Harris and Harris, 1982) but have not known where to turn to find the necessary information and training. They are not alone. In a paper sponsored jointly by NASP and the International Reading Association (IRA) at the IRA annual conference in Atlanta in 1984 some revealing facts were presented about school psychology training based on a survey of courses offered by school psychology training programs in America. It was learned that despite the demand for reading services by school psychological service consumers, the average training program offered less than one full course on reading diagnosis and remediation.

Thus, while demand for school psychologists to become involved with the troubled reader increases (Glick, 1973), training to

adequately respond to that demand appears to be insufficient.

Table 1

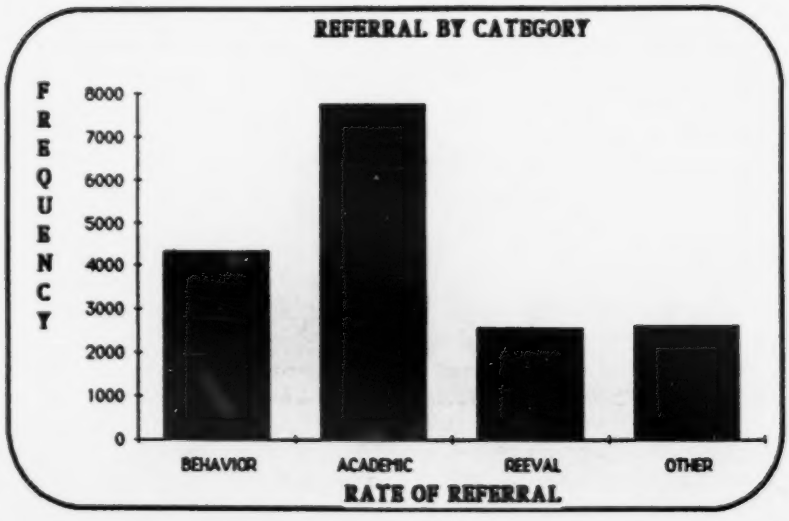


A= Academics, other
M= Matehmatics
R= Reading
O= Other
Z= Bizzare behavior
N= Nonspecific

C= Counseling
L= Language
D= Developmental
H= Home intervention
I= Interpersonal

T= Retention
P= Physical
E= Emotional
V= Reevaluation
S= Social

Table 2



What Skills Do I Have to Bring to the Reading Referral?

The phrase "training appears to be insufficient" is stated purposefully. There is much in our training which is directly applicable to a reading evaluation. There is, of course, a great need to provide training and exposure to the research related to reading instruction and what reading is really all about, how children learn to read and what the real role reading skills plays in the reading process. However, since learning to read is not a compartmentalized event, the knowledge, experience and understanding school psychologists have of the human experience can contribute significantly to a reading evaluation.

What leads one to be a school psychologist in the first place is a genuine caring for and desire to assist others in need. School psychology training has at its core the intent to provide a keener understanding of children and to facilitate the development of skills in the observation of the behavior of others. By becoming sufficiently sensitive and understanding of the growth and development of children, school psychologists are able to discriminate the salient behaviors and provide interpretive results relevant to the child, his or her family and the school.

An example may serve to clarify. Recently a counselor presented a school psychologist with a concern regarding a fourteen year old student, Joe. Joe's mother had provided details of a family episode.

It seems all was quiet one evening following dinner when Joe announced he was going "out." After indicating proper permission had not been sought and transportation not arranged Joe became extremely agitated and insisted he would be going out - permission or not.

Joe's dad finally was forced to sit on Joe to contain him. After calming down, Joe retreated to his room. Subsequently, Joe's dad joined him in his room for lengthy dialogue. After dad, left Joe's mom went to Joe's room and again they talked at length. Joe finally rejoined the family in a jovial and enjoyable mood.

The parent concern centered around Joe's sudden mood changes. They saw Joe as moving from tranquility to anger, demanding preferential treatment and back to tranquility. Both the parent and counselor concluded that the behavior was the result of drug usage.

A school psychologist was available who could see the larger picture and pull together variously from the understanding of the growing child's experience. The result was a less painful diagnosis and a more effective remedial approach.

What others saw as a sudden mood shift was put into the

perspective of a growing adolescent attempting, albeit ineffectively, to express greater independence and independent decision making, a need to have a greater impact on the environment and for increased parent attention. The outburst was only the tip of the iceberg of a growing adolescent's feelings and needs. But, because Joe was generally amiable, the negative manifestations of his needs were rarely so obtuse. Thus, what was perceived as a drug induced dramatic mood swing was only an expression of normal adolescent growth.

It was the task of the school psychologist to evaluate the behaviors presented in the context of the child, his family and the school. By seeing the larger picture, by understanding the context in which growth and development occurred a clearer view of context emerged.

The same is true when evaluating the poor reader. The skills which served so well in the case outlined above, should not be abandoned in favor of obtaining standardized scores on measures of academic achievement. Rather, those skills should be used as the backdrop against which the collected data such as standard scores are placed.

Then Reading is Important and I Have Some Training to Work With the Troubled Reader

The specifics will be examined more thoroughly later. What should be clear is that consumers of school psychological services are demanding that we become more involved in the diagnosis and remediation of those students with reading difficulties. What will hopefully become increasingly clear is that school psychologists clearly possess many of the skills necessary to conduct a thorough reading evaluation.

The skills necessary to identify weaknesses in reading achievement, to ascertain a rough reading level equivalent and to measure skills acquisition are not without merit. However, they do not, in and of themselves, provide sufficient information from which to develop remedial strategies. The traditional reading evaluation has not been inappropriate or invalid, it has only produced a partial evaluation.

By traditional reading evaluation, it is meant to describe an evaluation procedure which generally involves the administration of a measure of intellectual functioning and a series of standardized reading measures or inventories. The results of these measures are then compared and a statement of relationship between estimated potential for achievement and actual achievement is given.

The traditional reading evaluation has provided a fairly reliable means of determining those who are substantially below their perceived ability and present grade placement and those who are not. The issue

of where on a continuum one is to be considered handicapped and another not fails to be addressed by this model. What is not answered by this evaluation procedure is what will be done to resolve the reading problem for the individual student in question regardless of his placement along the potential/performance continuum.

Placement in a specialized program in and of itself is not a remedial strategy (Poostay & Aaron, 1982). While, in general, the instructional setting is different from that of the 'regular' classroom in size and student make-up the instructional approaches can vary from one specialized placement program to the next. For example, simply placing a child in a less populous class does not guarantee greater amounts of direct instruction. Neither should one assume that placement will lead to an approach different from the reading instructional approach used in the classroom. Unless given specific recommendations regarding instructional style or remedial strategies, teachers are as inclined as any to use the strategies they are most familiar with or with which they have been initially trained. While these strategies may be generally effective, no single strategy will be uniformly effective with all students or maximally effective with most students.

Chapter II

Reading and the Reader

The school psychologist must have knowledge of two areas before a successful diagnostic process can be achieved. The first is knowledge of what reading is and the second is an awareness of what constitutes a good reader.

Some might find it hard to believe that there is any doubt about what reading is. Yet, differing opinions and controversies surround this very topic. In fact, a major political battle is presently brewing on that topic. When the battle is done, the outcome could effect what most American children read in school, and what approach to reading instruction a vast majority of basal readers will rely upon. There is a very dedicated and determined push by many to define reading strictly as an ability to read at a literal level (Mancus & Carlson, 1985) and to discount any efforts to teach reading at a critical or creative level. The same efforts are being undertaken to limit teacher strategies to a simple phonetic approach, suggesting that an eclectic, whole word, sight word or context approach is without merit.

Having a clear definition of what reading is provides an evaluator with a meaningful context against which the referred student can be compared. Conducting an evaluation without having a definition of reading is a lot like being told you have just inherited 15 million gulldippers. Not knowing what a gulldipper is, one cannot be sure what having acquired 15 million of them really means.

Reading

Most think of reading in terms related to meanings or understandings which are derived from print. This is proper and an excellent place to start for this has already taken reading beyond the issue of reading as correctly pronouncing letters or words presented in sequence. What readers need to do when they read is understand. An ability to say all of the words may be quite irrelevant to one's understanding. Reading then is at least a meaning-oriented purposeful activity.

The following poem can serve to illustrate how reading is an event whose purpose is to derive meaning. Read the untitled poem below and try to note the exact moment when understanding occurs. You may understand almost immediately or you may need to re-read it several times. This is not a test.

With hocked gems financing him,
Our hero bravely defied all scornful laughter,
That tried to prevent his scheme.

Your eyes deceive you, he had said;
An egg, not a table,
Correctly typifies this unexplored planet.

Now three sturdy sisters sought proof,
Forging along sometimes through calm vastness
Yet more often over turbulent peaks and valleys.

Days became weeks,
As many doubters spread
Fearful rumors about the edge.

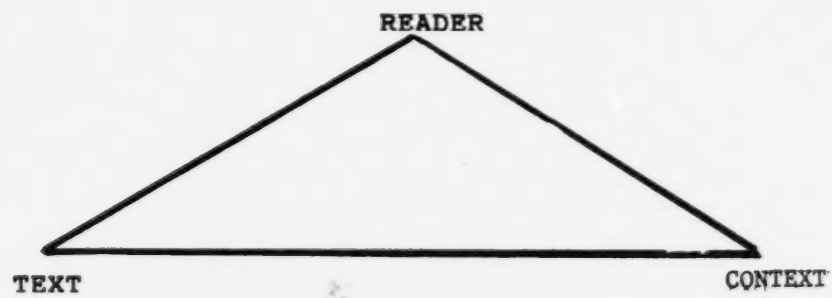
At last from nowhere,
Welcome winged creatures appeared,
Signifying momentous success.

The moment at which understanding occurs is the moment at which one can say one transcended word identification and began reading. That moment is referred to as "an occurrence of meaning" (Estes & Vaughan, 1985). When the concept of "Columbus" evolved out of the various words and phrases, the words and phrases became meaningful units assembled in an orderly fashion. Suddenly, everything made sense and one was able to interact with the text to experience the meaning intended by the authors.

The Occurrence of Meaning

How does this "meaningful moment" occur in this event called reading?

There are three essential factors involved, the reader, the text and the context. Each needs to be looked at briefly one by one.



Text

Until recently, text was viewed primarily as a repository of information. Recently, however, research has suggested this to be an oversimplification of the importance of text (Spiro, 1980; Steele, 1985). Text, it appears is not simply a container of information. Text is the conduit that links reader to writer. Text is language and language selected by the writer is a personal representation of the author's understandings and meanings.

In the poem just read, the authors shared their ideas, feelings, visions. They chose words like "three sturdy sisters" to conjure up more than the notion of three separate boats on a voyage. Three vessels, related by destiny, thrust permanently into the history of mankind carried Columbus, the "hero," across not rough water or waves but "turbulent peaks and valleys."

Text, despite its dynamism, however, is the only constant in reading. Text never changes once the final version is presented. We may read something at many ages and derive many different meanings at each age level even though the text remains constant. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn means something very special to an eight year old but, without any change in text, can mean something entirely different to an adult.

The Reader

The reader's contribution to reading is all the experiences the reader has had up to the moment of reading the passage. These experiences serve as the reader's knowledge, ideas, beliefs, imaginings and rememberings. They reflect the reader's feelings, his or her sensations, emotions and moods and they shape the reader's inclinations, that is, the reader's desires, motives and intentions.

Where experience leads to knowledge and knowledge serves the reader in his or her effort to master content, the connection is clear. However, the connection between reading and the reader's inclinations might be less clear. For the moment the old adage: You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink may suffice as an explanation. Volition, the desire or intent to gather meaning, to drink from the well, determines how inclined the reader is to draw meanings from the text. Thus, as a reader attends to a text and works to make sense of it, existing knowledge, attitudes and inclinations all combine to make the text meaningful.

Context

The context of reading refers to the physical location, that is, where the reader is reading; as well as the personal context, that is, why the reader is reading.

There are many reasons for reading: for test taking, to give a report, to write a paper, to find specific information like a telephone number or for recreational enjoyment. Readers read in a multitude of places, in the classroom, the doctor's office, the study, teenagers have even been seen reading upside down on a couch. Readers read in phone booths and bathrooms at work and occasionally college libraries. The purpose of and location in which one reads affects reading. Readers read differently when someone tells them what, when and for what purpose they are reading than when the reader selects these variables independently.

Reading, then, whether it is content reading or reading of narrative stories involves the text, reader and context in the pursuit of understanding. These elements are fundamental to reading and, when a reader finds little meaning or derives only minimal understanding from reading, the text, reader and context are important factors in the diagnosis of the difficulty.

The Good Reader

Having a definition of reading is important. However it is equally important to have knowledge of what constitutes a good reader. Though much research remains to be done in this area, several characteristics of the good reader have emerged from the research available today (e.g., Winograd, 1984; Steele, 1984; Gillet & Temple, 1984).

There are many characteristics which are apparent and which must be determined prior to an in depth analysis of a troubled reader. One would be intellectual functioning at a very gross level. Obviously, a mentally disabled student will probably find the reading process more difficult than a non-mentally disabled reader. Physical limitations such as vision problems, neuromuscular difficulties or other related difficulties must be considered. But beyond these limiting factors, there are a variety of more subtle characteristics which can allow one to become a skilled reader or prevent another from reading successfully.

The most striking conclusion one can draw from the research on good versus poor reader characteristics is that good readers attend to the three main cornerstones of the reading process, text, context and themselves as readers. Winograd (1984) essentially summarized the literature as suggesting good readers to be aware of the tasks assigned, sensitive to what is and is not important in the reading material and competent to summarize materials both with regard to personal importance of the information read and the authors sense of importance.

Winograd (1984) also found a number of additional characteristics which differentiate the good from poor reader. For example, when reading for content, good readers tended to gather information from the introductory and concluding paragraphs while poor readers did not differentiate these segments from the rest. Similarly, when

summarizing important materials, good readers were able to differentiate introductory and summary reading segments and to utilize them for comprehension and summarization. Poor readers were subject to serial position effect. They summarized more frequently information presented during the first part of the reading assignment and utilized subsequent information at a rapidly declining rate.

Good readers also appeared to be more organized and able to use more precise language to summarize materials read. They were more able to apply their own prior knowledge or 'schema' to the information read, allowing greater personal understanding.

Good readers better understood the goals of reading and applied the rules of reading more effectively. They were also better at identifying what the important elements of the text were and how to utilize textural cues to identify important information. Good readers were also better able to develop an internally meaningful representation of what was being read.

The work of Estes & Vaughan (1982) and many others describe the good reader as purposeful, active and thoughtful. Good readers read to answer questions, to be entertained and to read to learn. They are interested in what the writer has to say. While reading, the good reader actively applies relevant previous knowledge and develops an interest in what the writer has to say by engaging in pre-reading activity(s). During reading good readers actively engage in the act of thinking about what the writer has to say. When the reading assignment is completed, good readers think about what has been read and incorporate the new information, meanings, thoughts and emotions elicited into his or her life experience.

Successful readers also take risks while reading (Steele, 1984). They will guess at words and make predictions regarding the writer's meanings and will read with an open mind, learning whether or not their predictions are accurate. They will vary reading rate in response to the level of difficulty of the text and their purpose for reading.

In summary, the good reader absorbs himself in the reading process in an organized and intentional manner and approaches reading with a variety of attitudes which allow the reader to become absorbed in and learn from written text.

Readers who find reading valuable and informative approach text much like a consumer shopping for information. The reader is actively involved in consuming new information for future benefit but checking the product for misinformation, misunderstandings, or conflicts. The good reader sees reading as a means of diaglogue between the author and him or herself and personalizes the text, allowing for greater investment in the text and greater concentration. When personalizing the reading process it becomes possible for the good reader to apply his own schema or framework of prior knowledge to the information in the text and to re-structure the information in ways meaningful to the

reader. And finally, the successful reader is confident of his ability to learn from and enjoy reading. He or she is purposeful and interested in reading.

Of course, not all good readers display all of these characteristics at all times. There are many reading tasks during which the good reader is unable to become involved and interested yet learning occurs despite resistance. This is certainly true when many readers have the opportunity to read the directions for placing the annual registration sticker on their car license plate or read the fine print of an insurance policy. Yet, the good reader learns under these circumstances as well because reading has not become a roadblock to information or a barrier to the world but an automated process for gaining new information. The good reader knows with confidence that reading will lead to new information as she knows that walking down the street will lead to new surroundings.

As one can see from an analysis of the good reader, developing these characteristics in a young child who finds reading a difficult, unpleasant or threatening experience is a tall order. For many students referred for reading difficulties, the problems have existed for several years or more. The students' attitude toward themselves, the reading process, school and their goals in school have become so negatively influenced that the road to reading recovery will be long indeed.

The Role of the Basal Reader in Reading

The vast majority of American school children will be taught reading through the systematic application of a basal reading series throughout their elementary school years (Shannon, 1983; Battelheim & Zelar, 1981). In fact, according to Shannon (1983), 90% of the reading curricula in America is from commercially developed basal readers. Despite the wide acceptance basals enjoy in the school setting, some educators find them to be as much a part of children's reading difficulties as they are a part of the solution. In a rather startling discovery Shannon (1983) found basals to be accepted primarily for managerial rather than educational reasons.

It is not the task of the school psychologist to defend or propose a particular reading program. It is also not necessary to become intimately familiar with any basal series in particular. What can be valuable is knowledge of what role basals play in teaching reading (Harris and Harris, 1982) and what their strengths and weaknesses are.

Basals

It is generally assumed that basals begin at the beginning, and build in hierarchial fashion toward a pre-determined set of objectives which define a successful reader. In some respects this is true. In an examination of five leading American basal reading series, Durkin (1981) found that many so called skill areas were presented

hierarchially but comprehension as a reading skill was rarely directly addressed. It is also often thought that basals and their accompanying teacher's manuals provide a system for the direct instruction of reading and reading skills. Again, Durkin found basals to generally offer "application and practice exercises instead of direct instruction." Finally, it is often assumed that basals represent a systematic application of the science of reading instruction. In a study by Barton and Wilder (1964) reported by Shannon (1983) 80% of teachers and administrators considered basal materials to be scientifically based reading technology. Furthermore they observed that textbook series were certainly promoted as scientifically based by their publishers.

What Then Do Basals Do?

Basals successfully assist in the instruction of a large number of students who become good readers. They also provide exposure to the skills which are commonly associated with learning to read. Skills such as letter sounds, sound blends and other phonics skills are presented throughout most basal series. Other skills involving the mechanics of reading, the use of punctuation marks and quotation marks, parenthesis and underlining and italicizing are also taught. Basals assess these skills with frequency and offer the teacher and reader feedback on whether or not these skill areas have been mastered.

Basals also offer readers the opportunity to read a variety of short stories with a cluster of new vocabulary words presented at each level. The underlying theme of most basals is that students learn by doing rather than by being instructed. Thus, the stories presented are full of the application of many of the subskills which will be assessed following reading practices.

An analysis of basals by Fry and Lagomarsino (1982) indicated a shift in expectation between the third and fourth grade. Basals designed generally for first through third grade readers focused heavily on the assessment of subskills and on the process of "learning-to-read." For the older elementary students, fourth through sixth graders, stated expectations shifted to "reading-to-learn."

Yet, basals remained focused on the continued development of reading subskills, paying only minimal attention to comprehension instruction. Students were expected to read for factual information, for ideas, but were not told how to read for this information. Many simply continued to read content text as though they were reading narrative stories.

What Most Basals Do Not Do:

Probably the single most common reading referral problem is reading comprehension. Most teachers refer when they are convinced that the referred student is not comprehending the reading material at a level commensurate with expectations for that child. The school

psychologist is being asked to discover what is wrong with the child. Why is the student's comprehension so poor?

Without knowledge of basal readers our examination of the student's shortcomings alone would be appropriate. However, Durkin (1981) discovered in her analysis of four popular basal reading series that almost no direct comprehension instruction appeared throughout the K-6 series. The basals reviewed offered only assessment of comprehension and no direct instruction or encouragement to teachers to provide direct instruction of comprehension or comprehension strategies. In other words, she was unable to find evidence of an effort to instruct or rehearse what the real purpose of reading is or why readers learn to read. A study by John & Ellis (1976) reported by Shannon (1983) found less than ten percent of 1600 basal instructed readers viewed the purpose of reading as the process of gathering new knowledge or meanings.

Basal manuals provide a unified approach to the instruction of reading. But should that approach fail for some children, no alternative instructional approaches are offered.

There is evidence as well that the "skills" presented in basals are not presented in a hierarchially arranged format based on scientific findings. For example, Durkin (1981) found, in a task analysis of basals, that they were inclined to speak of a period as a sign ending a sentence before explaining what a sentence was. She also found language for instructing first graders to be inappropriate for first graders. Teachers were instructed to speak to first graders about literal meanings, logical inferences and prepositional phrases yet these concepts were not integrated into the reading curriculum.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, what basal readers have become is an intermediary, standing between the teacher and the student. Shannon's (1983) analysis of teacher use of commercial materials found teachers to have become alienated from their reading instruction.

His findings indicated "teachers and administrators believe that the (commercially obtained basals) materials can teach reading, and that they treat reading instruction as the application of the materials." That is to say, "teachers see themselves as clerks in the reading process, supplying the materials which will do the job of teaching reading."

Basals and the School Psychologist

What's a school psychologist to do? By knowing the strengths and shortcomings of most basal reading programs a more realistic appraisal of the child's ability to benefit from regular class instruction can be obtained. If reading comprehension is a problem and the student's teacher has not supplemented the traditional basal reader with comprehension tasks then it may not be accurate to say the child has not benefitted from instruction in comprehension skills. More

probably, the child has not drawn independent conclusions about what is important to remember and how to go about remembering written information because the child has not been taught how to determine and remember important information.

Teaching reading via basal readers can also lead to a very unusual referral problem with which many school psychologists are familiar. Many children are referred because they are failing in the reading program. They fail their reading tests and are a source of great concern to both teacher and family. When assessed, however, they appear to be adequate or better than adequate readers with no readily diagnoseable difficulty. Since basals are heavily involved in the assessment of skills and skills are, for many, only somewhat related to reading success, it is quite possible for a student to be a successful reader and fail "reading." Given the sanctity and power assigned to the basal reader by teachers and administrators (Shannon, 1983) it is quite probable that students with good reading ability and poor motivation to learn reading subskills, or good readers who have developed reading strategies different from those in basals will be seen as failing the reading program.

Chapter III

Learner Characteristics

If the reader is a collection of meanings, purposes, emotions, intentions and actions assembled in some unique fashion, then there is much to examine when evaluating the reader. More, of course, than one could easily or profitably examine in the time most school psychologists have available for evaluations. What is needed is an awareness of some of the general characteristics of a given child which tend to have the greatest impact on his or her ability to read and benefit from reading instruction.

Several of these characteristics will be familiar topics for many school psychologists. Such concepts as self concept and locus of control have been discussed in the literature for many years. Until recently, however, it has been difficult to draw very clear links between these concepts and actual classroom performance. Present research in these areas by both psychologists and reading specialists, however, has made the connection more visible. In addition, the development of the theoretical construct of 'schema' has further enhanced the connection between reader characteristics and reading.

A Few Words About Schema Theory

Schema theory has appeared in the literature for many years but has recently received considerable attention from many researchers (Pearson, 1979; Hacker, 1980; Bouma, 1981; Kak, 1980; Gillet & Temple, 1982). Given the importance of schema theory and its prominence in the literature today, an understanding of the word schema may be helpful. "Schema" is a term which is intended to embody the framework, the known world, the perspective, the fund of knowledge and fundamental belief system of the reader. In other words, in order for a reader to read the letters, words, and phrases of an author, that author's meanings must find a home within the schemata of the reader. The writings of the author must be meaningful to the reader.

New York

San Francisco Chicago

Los Angeles

New Orleans

TABLE 3

For example, the words you see presented in Table 3 probably need no further explanation.

Table 4

The map provided in Table 4 is not necessary for the reader's understanding. That is because having lived in the U.S., one has a schemata which makes the words of Table 3 meaningful.

However, the words of Table 5 may not be at all meaningful. More information is required to make the data comprehensible.

Ambala

Meghalaya

Kanpur

Ahmadabad

JamNagar

Puri

Hyderabad

Madras

Babgalore

TABLE 5

Comprehension is not possible until enough information is presented to activate a known schema which enables the reader to organize the information into a coherent unit of meaning.

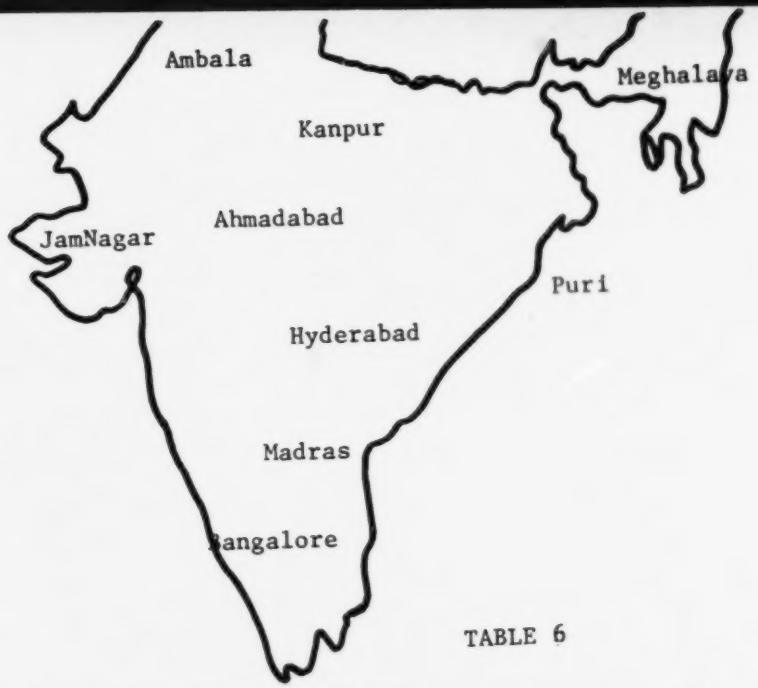


TABLE 6

The additional information provided by Table 6 may be all that is necessary to activate a reader's schema, making the information meaningful.

Viewing reading from a schematic perspective makes reading a very personal, individual activity. Reading becomes the act of comprehending, of inference making, and of interpreting. As David Pearson (1979) described comprehension in the context of schema theory: "comprehension is building bridges between the new and the known...comprehension is a dialogue between writer and reader; hence, (readers) interpret statements according to perceptions of what the writer is trying to do -- inform..., persuade..., or direct."

What characteristics tend to have a significant impact on readers?

Self Concept

The issue of whether or not self concept is related to classroom performance has long been debated. For many years those who argued for the connection had to rely on intuitive notions and teacher observations. Disbelievers would point toward the lack of empirical evidence to substantiate the relationship. Today, however, there is a growing body of researchers (Stenner & Katzenmeyer, 1976; Rogers, Smith & Coleman, 1978; Disdend, 1978; Schubert, 1978; Chapman & Boersma, 1979; Boersma, Chapman and Battle, 1979; Whaley, Kuby & Gaier, 1979; Smith, 1979; Reynolds, 1980) who have investigated that relationship between self concept and achievement and found the relationship significant. In a 1976 annotated bibliography of the literature exploring this topic Lang listed ten books and monographs, sixteen doctoral dissertations and twenty journal articles, all of them showing a relationship between self concept and achievement. With the weight of this evidence, it is difficult to argue against the connection between self concept and reading achievement.

Coleman's (1966) study Equality of Educational Opportunity reported by Sweet (1977) clearly identified self-concept as one of

three non-intellective variables responsible for more achievement variance than any other variables.

Self-concept is a complex human characteristic and its relative level is not easily ascertained. Rogers, Smith & Coleman (1978) and Boersma, Chapman & Battle (1979) reported that self-concept level is a variable trait reflecting a student's self image within his or her particular reference group. A student may demonstrate high self-concept and great self-confidence in most settings but have a distinct reading self-concept which is quite low by comparison. Or the reverse may be the case. Boersma, Chapman & Battle (1979) reported significant gains in reading self-concept for special education students when they were enrolled in full time remedial placements. The probable explanation being the change in the student's reading reference group.

There has also been some question regarding causation. Does a low self-concept precipitate reading difficulty or does reading difficulty cause declining self concept. Certainly it is easy to see how each might affect the other once the cycle has begun. A poor reader will most likely not feel overly positive toward his or her reading performance and have less regard for himself as a reader. Additional studies are needed to determine more precisely which factor is likely to initiate the downward spiral. However, research presently exists (Sweet, 1977) which substantiates the belief that declining self-esteem has a causal relationship with declining reading achievement.

An examination of the child's self-concept would seem to be in order. Such an examination can be difficult. As Rogers, Smith and Coleman (1978) pointed out, self-concept can be situational. It can also be masked. Learned helplessness, belligerence, defiance, manipulation, lack of motivation, machoism, and other counter-productive behavioral manifestation can all reflect self-concept problems (Fowler & Peterson, 1973; Disend, 1978; Bosworth & Murray, 1983) of the poor reader.

Are There Some Clues to Low Self-Concept

There are several areas related to self-concept which may provide the evaluator with insights. A list of characteristics which tend to reflect a child's self-concept and relate significantly to reading achievement includes the child's:

- response to competition
- response to praise statements and achievement outcomes
- locus of control
- social comparison group or groups
- general self concept relative to reading self concept
- perception of his or her teacher's concept of the child as a student
- view of him/herself - the child's metacognition.

Competition

Competition is an extremely prevalent aspect of life in America. This is true both in and out of the classroom. One may make many assumptions about competition based on the general notion that it teaches one how to win and lose with courage, or character or some other healthy consequences. These notions appear to be correct for a few at the top. However, there also appears to be differential reactions to both success and failure in competitive settings (Fowler & Peterson, 1973; Ames & Ames, 1978; Ames & Ames, 1981) depending on the self-concept of the individual.

It has been demonstrated (Ames & Ames, 1978) that for both good and poor achievers, competition leads to greater self denigration and a greater negative self-perception when performing poorly in competitive versus non-competitive settings.

Winning for both low and high self concept students also seems to result in some negative consequences. Winning competitively tends to involve little sharing of the success with others. There is often some interpersonal losses which affect the social comparison group from which the child draws his general self perception. However, this is where the similarities end for high versus low self-concept students.

The high self-concept student tends to react more dramatically to winning and losing. Losing for high self-concept students typically results in a greater deflation of ability level than occurs for low self-concept children. There is also an inflated rating of others' abilities and a decrease in their own perceived ability to compete in the future.

Low self-concept students react to failure with negative self statements in both competitive and non-competitive settings. This is especially true in non-competitive settings where there are no externally imposed consequences for doing poorly. Low self-concept students evidence a less dramatic reaction to winning and losing than do their high self-concept counterpart.

Low self-concept children tend to experience no real positive effects from successes (Ames & Ames, 1973; Fowler & Peterson, 1973). They seem to attribute their successes to luck or other external quirks rather than to a quality within themselves. Thus, for the low self-concept student, setting up competitive tasks that the student can succeed at will not necessarily result in improved self-concept, but observing a child's reaction to a competitive situation may yield some information about that child's self-concept level.

The performance of students in cooperative tasks can also provide information about a student's self-concept. Low self-concept children, working on a cooperative project that fails to meet their prescribed goals, tend to resort to high levels of self denunciation absorbing much of the failure of the group. This is in spite of their

own level of contribution to the group outcome. When involved in a successful group activity with high self-concept students, the low self-concept student tends to make greater gains in self-concept development despite their own contribution to the effort.

Locus of Control

Several characteristics relative to locus of control have been shown to relate to reading achievement and reflect self-concept level (Fowler and Peterson, 1973; Disend, 1978; Bosworth and Murray, 1983). It is not necessarily the case that all children with low self-concept will be externally controlled nor would it be accurate to state that all externally controlled children have a low self-concept. However, if one suspects low self-concept problems exist and observe the general characteristics of an externally controlled student, the probability that the two are related is quite high.

There are a number of observable characteristics of the internally controlled student which differentiate that student from an externally controlled student. They include tendencies:

- to accept responsibility for doing well
- to accept criticism positively
- to have a greater ego strength
- to respond more personally to teacher interactions
- to be less alienated from the class or teacher
- to avoid taking academic risks
- to be more persistent and on task

The externally controlled student likewise exhibits a number of distinctive characteristics. They include tendencies:

- to draw few causal connections between their behavior and external events
- to take little responsibility for contingencies
- to respond less to both positive and negative consequences
- to present an elevated level of cognitive passivity
- to produce little work during independent activities
- to lack persistence of effort
- to fail to respond positively to teacher counseling or expressions of understanding

Social Comparison Groups

Children develop differential reference groups based on the activities in which they are involved and their assessment of their own abilities relative to that group and activity. For most children a significant portion of self-concept is derived from social comparisons (Boersma, Chapman & Battle, 1979; Rogers, Smith & Coleman, 1978; Smith, 1979) of self to classmates. Some students may have a generally positive self concept, but during reading have a poor self concept. When such a differential reaction occurs, there may be signs of situational acting out or disruptive behavior which mask the

primary problem.

The significance of considering social reference groups for low self concept students is important to both evaluation and remedial consideration. Boersma, et. al. (1979) found mainstreaming to be a problem for learning disabled students with low self concept. When not mainstreamed, learning disabled students altered their reference group for reading achievement to the self-contained program within which they were enrolled. The result was increased self-concept and increased rate of reading achievement. Obviously, if self-concept issues are not addressed within the context of mainstreaming, students may not be provided with a sufficiently supportive setting to enhance learning.

Rogers, et. al. (1978) went so far as to suggest that "the most meaningful way to understand the relationship between academic achievement and self concept is within the context of the social comparison group or classroom" (p 56). Within the school setting there are many social groupings. How the student reacts within each one and how the group interacts with the child are important considerations.

What then are the social comparison groups? The entire class serves as one reference group. Organizing for reading instruction further groups students by dividing the classroom into various reading levels. Rogers, et. al. (1979) found reading self-concept to relate significantly to within class reading levels.

In addition to these general within class referents for the student, there appear to be further cues for social comparisons and subsequent self-concept from teacher interactions. Ziebel (1974), Weinstein & Middestadt (1979), and Fowler & Peterson (1981) found strong relationships between teacher interaction and student perception of self within the classroom. A variety of teacher behaviors were observed which can influence self-concept.

It has long been believed that children with reading difficulties require differential treatment. In many instances this is proper and the academic program may be different. However, not all differential treatment is productive or beneficial. Many teachers utilize differential questioning and cueing to guide students toward answers. Many children with low self-concept do not see this as an advantage. Low achieving, low self-concept students tend to perceive teacher time spent in this type of activity as a sign of concern rather than support (Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979). Students also feel that questions of direct fact, usually accorded the low achiever, low self-concept student are by far the hardest. High self esteem, high achievers are asked the inferential and deductive questions which they regard as easier.

Teacher responses within the reading groups communicate their perception of students. There is evidence (Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979) that instructional style and behavioral expectations change

considerably from one reading group to the next. High level reading groups tend to be less structured, more abstract, involve students in more abstract follow-up materials, be more informal and allow for a greater exchange of ideas between teacher and student.

Lower ability reading groups tend to be highly structured, involve a repetitive format, and allow for little exchange of ideas between teacher and student. Thus, the reading group a student participates in not only changes his reading level but alters the type of student-teacher interaction, kind of peer interaction and the nature of the work in which the child is involved.

Metacognition

A final view of the child relevant to reading achievement is the child's metacognition. How the child sees oneself as a learner.

Many low self-concept students perceive themselves as having little ability to ingest the materials presented to them. They underestimate their ability to understand concepts. This is particularly difficult to assess, however, because a teacher may see the student as unable to learn new concepts. Yet, when evaluating knowledge of concepts individually, the school psychologist may find the student to have an appropriate fund of information. One explanation for the observed difference is often the child's own lack of faith in his/her ability to manage concepts in concert while working on classroom activities.

The learner characteristics affecting achievement presented in this paper are not all inclusive. They do represent a large number of learner characteristics which influence a child's ability to learn, especially the child's ability to learn to read successfully. When assessing a student, if these characteristics are addressed, a remedial program designed to meet individual student needs effectively is possible.

Chapter IV

Diagnostic Evaluation and Assessment

The view of reading thus far presented provides a wide array of diagnostic areas for the school psychologists to explore. To explore these various areas, an organized diagnostic procedure would seem quite beneficial. With time in short supply for most school psychologists, a clear view of the diagnostic task can help meet the demands for service without extended response time.

There are two general areas of evaluation. The first is the characteristics of the child which lead to becoming a good reader versus a poor reader. That is, the school psychologist must learn something about what it means to be that child, in a classroom, facing the enormous task of learning to read or reading for new knowledge. The second general area is very familiar. The school psychologist must grapple with the various standardized measures of skills development. A determination of the student's level of reading "skills" achievement is generally required and can serve as a beginning point in planning a remedial program.

Before exploration can be made in either of these two areas, a clear sense of what a diagnostic evaluation is should be firmly in hand. The basic assumption for many (Price, Dunn & Sanders, 1981), is that a diagnostic evaluation, when completed, will have led to a description of the evaluated student's weaknesses and the level of deficiency or achievement in that weak area. Such information is provided so those working with the student will know what the academic weaknesses are and where to begin teaching.

The approach described above is sufficient if the reader evaluated is experiencing difficulty because of a superficial flaw or misunderstanding of the reading process. Such errors as misappropriating letter sounds through misunderstandings of previous teaching might be subject to correction through these means. However, few reading problems are the results of such superficial misunderstandings and remediation in many cases will require far greater effort and a far more detailed diagnostic evaluation (Poostay & Aaron, 1982).

To let the diagnostic process remain at this superficial level may result in the reading teacher and student working on symptoms rather than the problem and could result in frustration for both. It would be similar to a car having a malfunctioning carburetor because the gas tank is full of dirt, and rather than clean the tank, a mechanic would simply work on the carburetor with no lasting positive

results.

Another approach to the diagnostic evaluation (Elliot & Piersall, 1982) is to perceive it as a dynamic rather than static process, viewing diagnosis as ongoing and continuous. With a static approach, a diagnosis ends when a label or descriptor is generated. For instance, a label such as "learning disability," which summarizes general characteristics and like groups of behaviors in "like" children who are not succeeding in school, often concludes the diagnostic process. With a dynamic process oriented diagnostic evaluation, descriptors can be generated at appropriate intervals as the process proceeds, but are not an end in themselves. The labels or descriptors become a by-product of the process which may enhance or limit the educational environments one can call upon for remedial support.

What Is A Diagnostic Evaluation?

It is proposed that a diagnostic evaluation be seen as:

1) A process of decision making and not simply testing.

2) A qualitative and quantitative process.

3) A process leading to recommendation for instructional strategies as well as classification.

4) A shared project between the school psychologist, the classroom teacher, the child and his or her parents and any additional significant others involved in the evaluative or remedial process.

By a process of decision making it is suggested that the evaluator, and not various combinations of tests, ultimately determines student's needs. The evaluator's job is to synthesize the test results, observations and knowledge of children into decisions about the student. It is the job of the evaluator to take standardized test results and non-standardized information and blend them into human judgments about the needs of the child.

A qualitative evaluation involves the investment of the school psychologist in the experiences of the child. In so doing, the quantitative information becomes a data base of supporting information from which hypotheses can be generated. The student's abilities and disabilities need to be included in the hypothesis. From such speculations, a clearer understanding of where the child is located on a learning continuum can be presented and decisions about what paths to take to greater learning can be made.

The classification of students suggests little in the way of remedial strategies (Gillet & Temple, 1982; Ysseldyke & Marston, 1982; Lawler, 1984). Yet, as has been pointed out, classification has become the primary outcome of the evaluation process. What appears to

have crept into the process is the belief that if a disability is properly identified and labeled, it will go away. To simply label the disability, is not to remediate it. Labeling serves no real educational function.

The diagnostic process will have been successfully completed when recommendations for instructional strategies have been generated. It is quite evident, that despite the label a child may be assigned, (Gillet & Temple, 1982; Nardoo, 1981; Miles and Ellis, 1981; Miles, 1981) there exists very little uniformity within the like labeled grouping. In other words, even within a single classification, the variety of instructional needs is large and renders any assumptions about instructional strategies based on those labels inaccurate.

Finally, the diagnostic evaluation must involve the major principals in the student's learning environment. If learning to read is truly a whole child process, then the teacher, the child and the family must be included in the evaluation. The classroom setting and the curriculum need to be incorporated into the process as well. By involving these various elements in the decision making process, the resulting recommendations become relevant to the child, the teacher and the family.

Assessment

Initiating assessment of a troubled reader is similar to assessing any other student need. It is difficult to know where to begin and important not to be sidetracked or fooled by irrelevant issues or swamped by a shower of meaningless information. Like finding oneself in the middle of a rushing river, it is comforting to have a life jacket, some swimming skills and a beach on the horizon to swim toward. When initiating a reading assessment, a goal, some knowledge of the reading process and some skills in identifying what can help keep the reader afloat or sink can keep an assessment on the proper course.

Psychometrics and the Formal Assessment

The traditional reading evaluation generally involves the administration of a variety of psychometric measures. A measure of intellectual functioning, usually the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised, is administered. Following the cognitive evaluation a substantial number of formal reading "tests" are available and one or more of them administered to measure skill level by age and grade. Some of the more common include: the Peabody Individual Achievement Test, the Wide Range Achievement Test, the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, the Test of Reading Comprehension, the Test of Early Reading and many others. The decision as to which test to use and what skills to assess is a difficult one.

The choice of a particular assessment tool reflects many decisions about the type of standardized evaluation that will be conducted and what information will be gathered (Ysseldyke & Marston,

1982). Thus, a measure should be chosen carefully and with some knowledge of what the particular test actually assesses.

Recently, these authors came across a situation which serves as an example of inappropriate test use. An individual was diagnosed as experiencing a "psycholinguistic learning disability which was inhibiting reading development." The tests used were the WISC-R and the WRAT. Psycholinguistic theory is a language based, context based theory of reading. The WRAT is a word calling measure which in no way assesses contextual skills or comprehension of meanings of any kind, nor does it purport to measure these components.

In School Psychology Review, Ysseldyke and Marston (1982) present several tables which yield valuable information about what many of the leading standardized measures of reading do and do not assess, the relative validity of the various tests and some of the decisions that they believe can be made after analysis of the test results. The tables can serve as a valuable guide in evaluating the worth of some of the various standardized reading measures commonly used today. Knowledge concerning the purposes and applications of specific tests allows the school psychologist to correctly use and interpret available tests.

What standardized measures of reading skills can provide is a measure of how a particular student's skills compare to others in a normative sample of the same age or grade. They give very few clues as to why the student is reading at a particular measured level or what is preventing a more rapid rate of reading development. They can also serve to substantiate or recant a teacher's impression of a child's reading skills achievement; though this can only be the case if the measure is related to the reading program in which the child is instructed.

The scope and sequence measures found in all basal programs can also provide a measure of skills progress of a given student. Most basals require ongoing assessment of the skills presented and most students referred for evaluation have already been tested repeatedly throughout the basal program. As Harris and Harris (1982) point out, however, scope and sequence measures may lack sufficient reliability as measures of mastery because of the limited number of items at each skill level. They are also criterion referenced and lack a normative base.

But what about measures of intellectual functioning? The intelligence test has long been a major feature of the reading evaluation (Harris & Harris, 1982). It has become so ingrained a part of the reading evaluation that it is generally administered automatically. Yet, the relationship of intellectual functioning to reading achievement is somewhat suspect. Gillett and Temple (1982) suggest the relationship can only be considered in very broad terms. There is some correlation between high cognitive functioning and higher reading achievement. All those who have worked with poor readers will attest to the fact, however, that students with chronic

reading difficulties fall across a broad cognitive range. Many very quick thinkers who appear otherwise capable and academically able experience constant reading failure. Studies reported by Fry and Lagomarsino (1982) substantiate these observations. They note that the strongest correlations obtained between first grade reading skills development and intelligence measures is .40.

In effect, norm referenced measures serve a purpose in providing a reliable measure of some skills achieved and/or general cognitive abilities. What they do not provide (Ysseldyke & Marston, 1982 and Gerkin, 1985) is instructionally relevant information for planning remedial strategies. Norm reference tests can serve as a guide. Cognitive measures can help establish realistic expectation for a student when interpreted with caution. Norm reference reading achievement tests can provide information regarding the proper instructional level at which to institute remedial strategies.

When a reading referral arrives, what standardized measures are appropriate? Ysseldyke and Marston (1982) provide some help. In sighting the strengths and capabilities of the various measures listed, one can select measures to suit a particular need. What is most interesting, however, is that many of the measures listed may have already been administered to the student population prior to a referral for school psychology intervention. Additionally, an analysis of a student's educational history can often provide sufficient information to determine whether or not a measure of cognitive functioning is necessary. If the available norm referenced and educational history information is utilized, the amount of actual formal testing required can be reduced. In so doing, greater time can be allocated to the types of assessment procedures which lead to instructionally relevant information.

What Else Should an Assessment Include?

Following the application of standardized measures, two areas of assessment remain. One area being the assessment of the child as a student -- the phenomenological view of the child. The other area being assessment of the child as a reader.

Assessing the child as a student can be the most enjoyable and insightful portion of the evaluation process. It allows the school psychologist an opportunity to get to know the student on a personal level. This, however, can be time consuming if not guided by some goal directed approaches. A series of questions for both the student and referring teacher can help bring the child and his needs into clearer view. Questionnaires such as the ones outlined in appendix A and B can lead the evaluator toward a clearer understanding of the student's view of him/herself in the classroom and how the teacher responds to the child (Appendix A). A guided questionnaire can also address the characteristics most relevant to reading (Appendix B).

The information being sought during this portion of an assessment should lead to answers about the basic issues presented in Chapter 3.

The evaluator should know what the child's response to competition is, how the child reacts to praise statements and external reinforcers, and what their reactions to various achievement outcomes are. The evaluator should come to know through observation, student, teacher and family feedback where the child's locus of control lies. That is, is he/she generally independent and internally motivated or externally motivated. One should be able to identify social or academic reference groups for the child that could cause lowered self-concept, and be aware of the student's self perceptions, his/her view of the classroom and the student's feeling for the teacher's perceptions of the student as a learner.

In addition to this information about the child, the school psychologist must begin to draw a picture of what the child's experiential background and interests are. Prior knowledge is a key factor in the comprehension of written materials (Pearson, 1979; Pearson, Hansen & Gordon, 1979; Hacker, 1980; Stevens, 1980; Bowman, 1981; Samuels, 1982; Nicholson & Imlach, 1984). Without adequate prior knowledge or experience (Hacker, 1980; Nicholson & Imlach, 1981) new information will not be easily comprehended. For many students with difficulty either developing early reading skills or comprehending content material in school, the difficulty may stem from a lack of preparedness for comprehending the task.

What the school psychologist must do as the image of the child emerges is become familiar with the child's experiential base and the amount and complexity of the student's prior knowledge. In other words, become fmailiar with the schematas the reader will bring to the reading class and his/her various content courses. When this information is gathered and placed in context with the previously outlined data, a picture of the child begins to emerge which should lead to specific recommendations about the child's reading program, how the teacher ought to respond to the child and whether or not additional support help will be necessary.

Gathering this information about a child is essential in meeting the needs of a troubled reader. The training a school psychologist receives in human growth and development and the accumulated experiences of working with many children of all ages provides an excellent schemata for identifying the various characteristics which may precipitate or perpetuate reading problems. Employing a guided interview which provides information about these various characteristics, a school psychologist can perceive the child within that child's own unique context. In understanding the child's context, remedial strategies can be developed which utilize his/her own frame of reference and promote growth.

Assessing the Reader's Reading

After standardized tests are administered and a profile of the student drawn, the real work of assessing reading begins. There is a wealth of information that can be gathered about a student's reading and only a fraction of it will be presented here. However, once an

evaluator understands the process of reading more fully and becomes adept at observing readers read, obstacles to better reading become more apparent and detailed descriptions of all the potential pitfalls are not necessary.

To begin, there are some differences in the focus of assessment between pre-readers or early readers versus more experienced readers. This is especially true since classroom goals differ from one reading level to the next.

In most early elementary classrooms reading expectations are primarily structural in nature. That is, a child is considered a good reader if he is able to blend sounds, sound words out accurately, identify letters, match words to pictures and perform other skills tasks. Later elementary expectations change considerably, although actual reading instruction does not. From approximately fourth grade on the child is considered a good reader if he is able to comprehend the content of his/her reading material. One is no longer thought to read well simply by calling out words accurately. An assessment of reading skills must take these changing teacher expectations into account.

For a young student beginning to learn to read a variety of prerequisite skills are necessary. To be successful the student should have a concept of story structure, a sense of how stories are formulated. If the child can tell a story coherently or retell a story sequentially then story structure is probably present. Gillett and Temple (1982) point out that formulating a story structure concept is one of the major benefits children receive from having parents and siblings read to them. A speech-to-print match is also essential. That is, an association of language with printed materials is a necessary prereading skill. A powerful predictor of subsequent reading performance for first graders is letter identification. If a kindergartener or first grader is unable to identify letters of the alphabet on sight the probability of reading difficulties is very high (Fry and Lagomarsino, 1982). Yet, the path to remediation is not letter identification instruction. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest instruction of letter identificaton improves reading ability.

The early reader must also develop an understanding of symbolic representations. Without such skills it will not be possible to connect written words to concepts or entities. Initial memory strategies in the form of categorization and rehearsal generally appear from the ages of five to seven. If these strategies do not appear spontaneously in reading information or listening to instructions or other settings where multiple information is presented then two possibilities exist. The first being that the child may not have developed memory strategies incidentally and will need direct instruction to learn them. Or, secondly, the student may have developed them but fail to apply them during the reading process and require instructions in how to utilize memory strategies in the classroom.

These are the primary concerns which differentiate the early reader evaluation from the reader in upper elementary grades and beyond. The remaining assessment areas are relevant to both student populations, differing only by degree.

Once some reading skills have developed the most effective assessment technique is to have the student read to the examiner. What is read and how much depends on the child's reading ability and what the evaluator's assessment goals are. It is suggested that the child read from both the classroom reading text and a content text at an appropriate level. Reading from a Weekly Reader or Ranger Rick article can often offer a contrasting image of the reader when compared with his/her basal reader performance.

When the student is reading it should always be kept in mind what the purpose of reading is. That of course being to read for meaning. Many troubled readers are not aware of why they are reading. This is an excellent question for the student before beginning reading.

Once the student begins reading there is a wealth of information which the sensitive evaluator can gather. A good place to start is to determine to what extent the reading process has been automated. That is, how fluently does the child read the words and respond to punctuation marks and other reading road signs.

There are two essential tasks which require the readers attention. The first is the internal operation of decoding the letter sounds, words and sentences. The second task is external, requiring attention to topical or content problems (Samuels, 1982). For a student to fully attend to the contextual aspects of reading the decoding process must be automated. The more automated the decoding process, the more attention can be given to comprehension.

Thus, automation of the reading process is important to the final goal of reading. If a student must allocate most of his cognitive resources to the structural aspects of reading (Grabe, 1980; Fay, Trupin & Townes, 1981 and Samuels, 1982) there will be few cognitive resources available to apply to content.

If the student is attending to structural characteristics and unable to read for meaning, one can conduct an analysis of the basic structural problems. Word identification problems are a common problem and are usually accompanied by poor application of phonics skills or a limited sight word vocabulary. These difficulties can be easily observed. If the student is experiencing considerable structural difficulty at the present instructional level or at the earliest formal reading instruction levels, then pre-reading readiness skills should be assessed.

For older students, if structural problems exist at their instructional level, determine whether the student can successfully read for meaning without structural difficulty at a lower reading level. If so, then the structural obstacles can be more easily

identified. Additionally, the student is also able to demonstrate a capability for reading for meaning. This suggests the student will be ready to benefit more fully from reading once the structural and/or any interpersonal roadblocks are remediated.

The level of automation of the decoding process varies with age and grade. Obviously, most first graders will not have automated much of the decoding process. This may also be true to lesser degrees in second and third grade. However, between the third and fourth grade the level of automation can become crucial to the reader. As has been mentioned, teacher expectations shift (Fry & Lagomarsino, 1982) from learning-to-read to reading-to-learn. The student is now required to learn new knowledge from text. If the student is still attending almost exclusively to the decoding process he/she will be unable to make the transition.

One caution when analyzing student's oral reading. There appears to be a tendency for teachers to correct students oral reading miscues. It is also quite natural to view them as indicative of reading weaknesses. However, this might not always be the case. Many good readers make many reading miscues when reading, often as frequently as poor readers (Gillett & Temple, 1982). There is, however, a qualitative difference between the two that stands their miscues apart. Good readers substitute words of similar meaning and their miscues are content appropriate. For example the good reader might read:

"The woman drove her automobile to her neighbor's home." as "The woman drove her car to her friend's house."

The poor reader miscues might sound something like the following:

"The man drived his snowmobile to the nighttime home."

These latter miscues are out of context and suggest both structural and contextual problems.

For most upper elementary students and above the primary referral problem is comprehension. Assessment of comprehension problems are more complex but equally assessable through an informal evaluation model.

Comprehension of written materials involves a variety of interactive behaviors. The presence or absence of any one of these behaviors can affect a student's ability to comprehend. To comprehend a student needs to be able to identify relevant "cues" to meaning within the text, organize the information into meaningful categories, become cognitively involved in the process by applying relevant schema, have sufficient prior knowledge, and be able to develop an effective visual image (Stevens, 1980, Fry, et. al., 1981; Nicholson & Imlach, 1981; Grabe, 1982; Gillett & Temple, 1982 and Winograd, 1984).

Poor readers find it difficult to identify important material in text (Winograd, 1984). This is true for both textual and contextual information. Poor readers fail to understand what the author sees as

important material and they have difficulty identifying what material are important to themselves as readers.

When reporting on important information, poor readers experienced serial position effects, forgetting what came first (Winograd, 1984). When writing summaries of written material, good readers were less redundant and tended to have less run-on combinations in sentence structure than did poor readers.

What appears to occur for many poor readers with comprehension problems is a breakdown in their ability to organize written materials into manageable units of meaning. When questioning the poor reader about content, it is common to find them poorly organized and overwhelmed by the information presented. By being unable to distinguish relevant from irrelevant stimuli, the poor reader is not able to effectively categorize information into gists, which can be more easily incorporated into available schema. Consequently, both short and long term memory is hampered. Nicholson, et. al. (1981) suggest the poor reader to be: "...assailed by every word in the paragraph" (127). The reader needs very effective strategies to cope with this volume of information. Unfortunately, the lack of effective strategies is also a benchmark of the poor reader. To learn from written material one needs to identify the salient points and be able to summarize them.

Summarization is a strategy separate from identification of important information. Summarization is the act of organizing the information so that it becomes relevant to the reader. Even if the relevant points are identified, poor summarization strategies will result in the loss of the information.

And finally, when assessing the poor reader one should attempt to determine the level of the child's cognitive involvement in the reading process. Prior knowledge and available schema are directly related to reading comprehension (Pearson, Hansen & Gordon, 1979; Stevens, 1980; Samuels, 1980) and awareness of the child's prior knowledge and experiences is essential for effective remedial intervention. However, if the student remains apart from the reading process, fails to become actively involved in reading for meaning, prior knowledge will not be applied to the information.

There are many reasons why the poor reader fails to become cognitively involved in the reading process. Many are outlined in Chapter 3. However, one skill which may stymie many poor readers is the ability to develop an effective visual image, or as Winograd (1984) described, an internally meaningful representation of what they (readers) are reading.

To assess these skills one needs to:

1. Assess the child's sensitivity to important information by asking what the child finds important in the passage.

2. Assess through analysis of oral and written reports of written material the student's ability to coherently organize information and

3. Assess the student's summarization strategies by asking them to re-formulate information into gists or brief units of meaning expressed in their own words.

The list of characteristics which distinguish good readers from poor readers grows each year. It is impossible to remain abreast of all the research being done each year. What is important to consider when assessing troubled readers is that reading is a human endeavor. To determine where problems lie, that person experiencing the problem must be understood in his own context. No amount of standardized testing is going to provide the evaluator with the information essential to remediating the problem. The school psychologist must come to know the student both as a human being and as a reader.

Chapter V

Remediation

Remediation is the final goal of evaluation. Like diagnosis, arriving at remedial strategies is not a static, singular act. Decisions about remediation are ongoing. Many remedial decisions will not be validated and will need to be altered or amended. As remedial strategies are employed, they can also help serve as ongoing diagnostic tools. By evaluating their efficacy, one can further discern the nature of the reading problem as well as institute new strategies to address the student's needs.

As with diagnosis, it is equally important to have some clearly established target results for remediation. At times remediation begins without any preconceived ideas of what the final outcome will be. It is very difficult to measure success when target goals have not been predetermined.

One may ask at this point if there are some specific recommendations which will respond to the areas outlined in the assessment process. The answer is yes. There are many more remedial strategies in the literature than can be addressed in this paper. Strategies which will be presented here address problems uncovered in the evaluation areas previously identified.

Remediating Self-Concept

As has been suggested, self concept plays a critical role in the development of reading skills. For this reason, remedial strategies which address self concept will be presented first. Following these strategies, some remedial strategies will be presented which directly address reading instruction.

Self concept is one of the most difficult constructs to address directly. Remedial approaches, however, can be drawn from the characteristics of both the good and poor self-concept student. If, through direct instruction or cognitive retraining, low self-concept students can adopt some characteristics of high self-concept students, significant steps will have been taken toward successful intervention.

Within the classroom, a number of strategies can be employed to increase self concept. These strategies tend to fall into four categories: how students are grouped for instruction and self reference, teacher feedback, student responses to the instructional setting, and peer interaction. There is some overlap in these categories, of course, but when remediating reading self-concept

problems, these variables are subject to manipulation and play an influential role in self-concept determination.

Grouping

The first area of consideration is grouping. As has been suggested, a student's reference group for social comparison and self esteem is very important. So, too, is the grouping of students into reading groups (Borko, Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Teachers tend to group almost exclusively on the basis of reading achievement scores. Yet, many teachers have differing notions of what they consider the important portion of their reading program. Rather than simply grouping according to achievement scores, it may make more sense to periodically group according to:

- participation level in class
- work habits
- social skills
- self concept
- interests.

Based on assessment data many other guidelines for grouping exist. For example:

- place low self-concept children in cooperative groups with high esteem students on success oriented projects where appropriate.

- group like ability students in competitive or cooperative group tasks.

- provide students with differential reference groups and/or shifting reference groups.

- provide mainstreamed handicapped readers with opportunities for a differential reading reference group. This can be done by providing grade reporting and all other reading related feedback in relationship to performance within the specialized reading program. This is easily done for those taking specific reading instruction only within the confines of a special education program. In the regular classroom, students may need specific instruction to develop a realistic reading reference group.

- avoid reading group comparisons. Do not discuss groups in high and low terms but present them as different groups working toward a similar goal in differing ways. When students shift from group to group for various reasons they tend to be less likely to view groupings in "high" or "low" terms.

- some teachers tend to feel more comfortable with identifying fairly rigid groups and maintaining their integrity. Keep in mind the differential instructional style that various

groupings tend to impose (Burko, et. al., 1981). Match student learning style to teacher instructional style of a particular grouping.

Teacher Feedback

The next and possibly most influential element of the classroom is teacher feedback. How the teacher responds to the student on a daily basis may have more impact on a student's self-concept than any other variable. Some methods for affecting this variable will be listed.

Provide adequate and proximal positive feedback to all students in the classroom. By adequate, it is suggested that praise statements should outnumber negative feedback four to one. Proximally, implies getting close to the student. Praise the student on a one-to-one basis near his seat or his work. Like sound, praise tends to diminish in intensity over distance.

Provide direct instruction to those students who do not know how to respond to praise statements. That is, provide them with sufficient language to internalize praise, making it meaningful. For many children, "Nice job, Johnny" or "Good work, Suzie" is not meaningful. The student simply hears the praise statement, experiences momentary delight and fails to connect it with the act which earned the praise statement.

To instruct students who do not internalize praise or link praise to actions, such praise statements as, "Nice job, Johnny, you completed the entire assignment and that pleases me. Whenever you complete your assignments I am pleased and will be telling you how pleased I am. So, continue to do all of your assignments." are far more effective. Johnny now knows what behavior earned the praise and how he can earn praise again.

Avoid teacher counseling time. Do not communicate to the students the notion that they are somehow different and need not meet obligations as a student because they deserve concern and compassion.

Provide mild negative consequences to low self-concept students who work below expectation.

Reduce opportunities for failure in non-competitive settings. Avoid win-lose situations for students. This is especially important for low self-concept students who show signs of learned helplessness. They may tend to assume that they will not be able to compete effectively and win. Thus, rather than risk trying and failing, they resist effort and fail, and in failing justify their original notion.

Reduce the variability of presentation for those who most benefit from predictability.

Speak openly of students' abilities and help students keep

failure in perspective. Help students maintain the long term goal of successful reading achievement and de-emphasize short term performances.

In competitive events winning is its greatest reward. Additional teacher responses to the winner only serves to draw further distinction between the winner and the remainder of the group or class.

Where learned helplessness is apparent, demand action, demand decisions and verbally connect all actions with outcomes for the student. The tendency of a student who is depressed or evidences learned helplessness is to become inactive. To become neutral to the instructional environment and be unable to independently initiate activities such as work completion. This behavioral pattern then sustains itself by leading to environmental responses of failure and inadequacy. To break the cycle, forced activity through required efforts or discipline involving action for failure to perform is required.

Describe clearly the attributes of a student which tend to be interfering with adequate performance. Students with low self-concept tend to generalize all failure. When presented with negative feedback such as a failed test or assignment, they often explain the failure with self talk such as: "See I really am dumb" or "I can't do any of this stuff, it's too hard for me." These negative self statements only serve to substantiate a low self image and do not identify the real problem. The teacher should provide accurate attributional feedback for failure such as: "Sarah you failed your assignment because you did not re-read the chapter. You are able to pass this assignment but you did not do the necessary work to pass," or "You are doing poorly because you are not reading the practice questions. It is not because you cannot pass. If you will complete all of the assignments and do the practice questions your grade will improve." By attributing failure to the actual causes, the student has an understanding of what is required to perform successfully and cannot resort to unproductive self denunciation.

Enhance student awareness of their abilities through direct instruction of what the students' competency areas are.

Provide statements of competence and/or new cognitions with which a child might describe himself more accurately.

Where disruptive or other counter-productive behaviors are masking reading self-concept, provide a clear explanation of why the student is behaving inappropriately and provide alternative.

Differentially reinforce reading behavior options.

Student-Classroom Interactions

The third area is the student's response to the teacher and

classr m setting.

Encourage academic risk taking. Provide opportunities for students to speculate about answers to classroom topics prior to any instruction on the new topic. This gives a good measure of students prior knowledge and affords them the opportunity to hazard guesses without fear of judgment or risking self regard.

Provide opportunities for students to assume responsibility.

Require cognitive involvement through either written or oral responses to written materials. Let the student know what they will be questioned about before they read the text. It provides incentive.

Set goals for reading based on individual growth. Chart progress or teach the student to monitor his or her own progress.

Allow for decision making in both academic and social settings. Let students make choices which will impact upon the entire class. Use forced choice opportunities for students who do not make realistic choices.

Provide a secure environment within which mistakes are encouraged and the consequences for mistakes are predictable.

Peer Interactions

Much has been written regarding peer interaction and peer tutoring practices. Almost all the literature today speaks of the efficacy of peer tutoring models. Much is also written regarding the efficacy of direct instructional time. Peer tutoring offers opportunities for both self-concept improvement and increases direct instructional time.

Increase opportunities for peer academic interactions. Gradually increase opportunities for peer interactions and allow time for students to collaborate on independent seat work.

Provide opportunities for peer tutoring. Allow the troubled reader to both receive peer tutoring from someone more competent but also allow the troubled reader the opportunity to peer tutor those less competent.

In addition to self-concept activities in the classroom, the home environment is also an essential element of self-concept development. Provide those in the home with an understanding of how self-concept forms. De-emphasize school failure and encourage parents to provide opportunities for decision making, taking responsibility, and making a contribution to the family unit. The home should also help the student develop a self-concept apart from school entirely.

What is ultimately recommended to aid poor self-concept is a classroom approach which accomplishes a few basic goals. These are to

provide a classroom which:

- is non-punitive
- is well organized
- provides opportunities for positive feedback
- provides clear expectations
- provides effective discipline
- expresses caring for the students
- avoids overt competition
- treats students uniformly
- is predictable
- provides continuous clear feedback.

Once self-concept is addressed, the number of specific, reading related remedial strategies is enormous. A few will be outlined.

Remediating the Reading Program

It is clear that remediating actual reading difficulties is an appropriate task for the regular class teacher during reading instruction time. It is also the primary assignment of many special education teachers, chapter one teachers and other remedial reading instructors. In many school systems, however, the availability of chapter one services is discontinued in later elementary grades. Reading instruction as a content course is also discontinued, leaving the poor reader with content courses with which to contend.

This scenario often spells disaster for the troubled reader. While resource help is available for some, content courses offer serious problems. Remedial strategies must then be applicable to not only reading instructional classes, but also to content courses as well.

In presenting remedial strategies for the classroom those strategies which seem most appropriate for early elementary grades will be presented first. Strategies for upper level students will then be presented with an emphasis on comprehension of content materials.

As was mentioned earlier, basal readers are the most popular tool for instructing reading. Knowing their limitations is an important remedial step. By knowing what they do not teach as well as what they do, it is possible to determine actual learning difficulty from instructional design problems.

When teaching young students to read, a great emphasis is placed on skills building. Such an emphasis may be necessary (Calfee & Pointkowski, 1981) but is not sufficient for a complete reading program. Meaningful reading activites and direct reading-for-meaning instructional activities are necessary to involve the student cognitively in the reading process.

Calfee & Pointkowski (1981), in a study of first graders exposed

to a variety of instructional styles both highly structured and non-structured found that children learned the material they were taught. If the approach was phonetic decoding, then they learned these skills better than other reading behaviors. If the approach was reading-for-meaning, then they became more proficient at reading passages. They also found that children learned more when the instruction was well organized and structured. In addition, decoding skills instruction tended to lead toward skills in comprehension, but reading for meaning approaches did not always lead to greater decoding skills. Lastly, children who had not mastered all the prerequisite skills of first grade became proficient readers and subsequently read on grade level with appropriate reading instruction.

From this study and others it becomes evident that an early reading program requires both skills training and reading-for-meaning instruction. Can both of these components be accomplished in the instructional time allowed? The answer from David Pearson and others is yes. In Pearson's book Teaching Reading Comprehension (1979) several suggestions were made for making the skills worksheets a meaningful concept and comprehension task.

"Concept stretching" was a technique suggested which took a typical worksheet assignment and expanded it into a comprehension task by using the words or concepts presented as concept cues for discussions of word meaning and usages. Another technique was "question slicing," a technique for perceiving questions in terms of chunks of information and slicing questions into smaller units if students have difficulty with the questions presented. In other words, task analyzing the questions.

Despite the need for some skills instruction, the need to instruct for meaning is still the most important reading step to be taken. Basals do not provide instruction in comprehending materials. They do not offer students instructional cues between the third and fourth grade to help them make the transition from reading skills training to reading-for-meaning. If instruction in reading for meaning is incorporated into the reading program early, many later problems can be avoided.

Young students in the early grades also require some differential in class treatment.

First graders benefit more from individual opportunities for practicing skills and the number of academic interactions, especially single questions about reading skills, is highly related to increased reading achievement (Fry & Lagomarsino, 1982).

Systematic questioning rather than random questioning leads to improved achievement. Offer the class cues as to what will be asked and in what order so that students can prepare.

For students in the upper elementary grades effective instructional variables shift. Those which tend to result in greater

achievement include:

- increasing instructional time
- involving students and teachers in discussions and questioning
- providing main ideas summaries
- providing knowledge links to previously learned materials
- summarizing lessons
- establishing clear objectives and a well organized presentation.

Beyond these differences in approach to early versus later elementary students, most remediation is applicable to all levels of instruction and to most students. The most important strategy and the most common one to emerge from the literature is relevant to all grades. It is simply providing students with more direct instruction time (Fry & Lagomarsino, 1982; Gillet & Temple, 1982; Branwhite, 1983, Bromley & Carpenter, 1984).

Time on tasks is one of the most salient factors in reading achievement. The longer students spend in reading group in the early grades the greater the achievement level. The less time teachers spend in transition activities from one task to another, the greater the reading achievement level.

The issue of direct instruction is an important one to consider. In many instances, a student experiencing reading difficulty may be placed in a remedial program of one kind or another. Often when this is done, the time set for remediation is during regular class reading time. Thus, the student spends his/her time in remediation while the class receives its usual instruction. It may make more sense to schedule remediation during another part of the student day, allowing for increased direct instruction of reading.

Remediating Comprehension

The next area to remediate involves the student's ability to comprehend written information. Activating schema, pulling together prior knowledge and developing new schema from new knowledge is the goal. To bring these components together a series of steps can be taken which provide the student with a system for comprehending.

The first step is to activate the student's prior knowledge of content. This can be done by asking pre-questions about the content, listening to the ideas presented and organizing the ideas into appropriate categories. Help the student to anticipate what information will be presented and develop some opinions about the content before reading. Formulate questions which may be answered when reading. Determine what outcomes from reading the material will be expected. Provide guides for organizing the information.

Once reading is begun, instruct the students to seek answers to questions, relate the new information to the discussion held prior to reading, find contradictions and identify important points.

Have students monitor their own reading progress. For students who are easily distracted, set short time limits for reading and have them ask themselves how their reading is going. Instruct students to seek answers to problems if their reading is not going well. Have students ask why the reading is going poorly and what can be done to improve.

Students should stop and test themselves orally on what they have read. Self testing can provide instant feedback on whether or not they are benefiting from their reading time. Teach students to ask themselves questions such as:

- What have I learned new?
- What does the author want me to know?
- What do I think about what is being read?
- Do these ideas agree or contradict what I already know?
- What is the order of the information?
- Does the writing make sense to me?
- Do I understand what is being presented?

Students often need to be directly taught the language cues that guide information. Teach them to identify key phrases like "is in the category of," "is a kind of," "here is an example," "is a part of," "relates to," etc.

Following reading many students simply close the book and walk away. They leave reading the same way they leave an empty room at night, they flick out the light and walk away. Memory has little chance with this approach. Instruct students to close the book and immediately review the content. Recall their original questions and answer them in the student's own language. Note what is remembered and seek out what is not. Develop an organizational pattern for the new information which fits in with the original schema.

Finally, help the students to imagine what situation they will be in when they have to recall the information, i.e., tests, oral reports or class discussion. Go over the material they think would be relevant to those settings and rehearse. Draw maps of the information which outline the main concepts and provides a visual recall cue for memory. Re-identify the original purpose for reading the material and what gains are intended.

These are the primary areas for remediation. If a remedial program addresses just a few of these areas the likelihood for greater achievement is increased.

There are many more areas. Reading is a form of language. Language remediation can have dramatic impact on reading achievement. Schema building through expanded experiences for those with limited experiential backgrounds is important. Using writing as a tool for reading remediation can be extremely effective. Direct instruction of inferential learning, even for early elementary students enhances

reading achievement. Programmed peer tutoring and cross age tutoring has proven to be very effective. Utilization of language experience stories is also an effective strategy.

What is important to remember is that when one is working toward remediating reading problems, strategies should be geared toward a larger goal. Reading is a sub-skill of language and language is a reflection of the student's experiences and his view of himself as he experiences his/her world. Thus, remediating reading is much like fixing a cracked tile in a tile floor. It is not enough to simply replace the tile. One must reinforce the surrounding tiles, clear away the adhesive below the damaged tile and provide a new bedding upon which to rest the new tile. Reading problems, like the broken tile, are often the outcome of weak or insufficient underpinnings. Merely replacing the tile will only result in future problems. By taking the time and care to repair the surrounding tiles and adhesive, the new tile will last indefinitely.

The next area to remediate involves the student's ability to comprehend written information. Activating schema, pulling together prior knowledge and developing new schema from new knowledge is the goal. To bring these components together a series of steps can be taken which provide the student with a system for comprehending.

The first step is to activate the student's prior knowledge of content. This can be done by asking pre-questions about the content, listening to the ideas presented and organizing the ideas into appropriate categories. Help the student to anticipate what information will be presented and develop some opinions about the content before reading. Formulate questions which may be answered when reading. Determine what outcomes from reading the material will be expected. Provide guides for organizing the information.

Once reading is begun, instruct the students to seek answers to questions, relate the new information to the discussion held prior to reading, find contradictions and identify important points.

Have students monitor their own reading progress. For students who are easily distracted, set short time limits for reading and have them ask themselves how their reading is going. Instruct students to seek answers to problems if their reading is not going well. Have students ask why the reading is going poorly and what can be done to improve.

Students should stop and test themselves orally on what they have read. Self testing can provide instant feedback on whether or not they are benefiting from their reading time. Teach students to ask themselves questions such as:

- What have I learned new?
- What does the author want me to know?
- What do I think about what is being read?
- Do these ideas agree or contradict what I already know?

- What is the order of the information?
- Does the writing make sense to me?
- Do I understand what is being presented?

Students often need to be directly taught the language cues that guide information. Teach them to identify key phrases like "is in the category of," "is a kind of," "here is an example," "is a part of," "relates to," etc.

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Appendix A

Student Reading Questionnaire:

1) What is it you like most about school?

2) What is it you like least about school?

3) How do you feel you do in school?

4) Do you have a lot of friends at school? Who are your friends?

5) Is reading easy or hard for you?

6) Do you participate in band or sports or other school activities?

7) How do you do in class compared to most kids in your class?

8) Are you a good reader or is reading hard for you?

9) Do you usually remember what you read about or is it hard for you to remember?

10) Do you get your assignments done in class or are you behind in your work?

11) If I asked the teacher what kind of a reader you were, what would

your teacher say?

12) Do you get in trouble in class often?

13) If you do get in trouble occasionally, is it usually your fault or are you usually in trouble because of someone else?

14) Do you get along with your teacher?

15) When you get a good grade on something, is it because you studied harder or because the test or work was easier than usual?

16) Do you like to start new games with the other kids at recess or do you join in with them and play what they are playing?

17) Do your classmates get along with you and like you most of the time?

18) Do you like to read?

19) When you do well, what would you like your teacher to do?

20) Are you a fast learner or a slow learner compared with most kids in your class?

Appendix B

Reading Teacher Questionnaire:

1) What basal is the child reading from?

2) Do you use the scope and sequence performance charts provided by the basal reader?

3) What do you consider the child's primary difficulty when reading.

4) Does the child have difficulty in all areas of classwork?

5) Does the child participate in class discussion?

6) What do you consider the student's overall cognitive ability level to be?

7) How well does the student get along with peers?

8) How well does the student get along with other adults in the educational setting?

9) What reading group is the child in in comparison to the rest of the class?

10) Are there any behavior problems? If so, do they occur during specific activities and if this is the case, which ones?

11) What is the child's social comparison group? How many friends does the child have?

12) How does the child respond to competition in the classroom setting and during free time?

13) Does the student complete assignments?

14) How willingly does the student accept work assignments?

15) Is the child a leader or follower?

16) Where is the child's source of motivation - internal or external?

17) How often has the child moved to new schools during his or her school career or how often has the child experienced a change in reading programs?

18) Have there been any major life changes for this student of which you are aware?

19) What would you say is the child's attitude toward school?

20) How long can the student attend to a task?

21) What is the student's response to praise statements?

22) How well does the student accept responsibility?

23) How does the student respond to teacher interactions?

24) Is the student willing to take educational risks?

25) Does the child relate his own behavior to natural consequences within the environment?

26) How well does the child work independently?

27) How well does the student handle criticism?

Appendix C

IMPORTANT ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1ST – 3RD GRADERS

TO IMPROVE READING:

- INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE.
- INCREASE NUMBER OF INTERACTIONS.
- INCREASE NUMBER OF SINGLE QUESTIONS ABOUT READING SKILLS.
- FOR SOME-SYSTEMATIC ORDER OF QUESTIONING & SECOND CHANCE QUESTIONING WITH CUES.
- SUSTAINED MODERATE FEEDBACK.

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